

UNSATISFACTORY TENANTS

Sixth Report
of the Housing Management Sub-Committee
of the
Central Housing Advisory Committee



LONDON
HER MAJESTY'S STATIONERY OFFICE
1955

HOUSING MANAGEMENT SUB-COMMITTEE

Members

MR. P. L. LEIGH-BREESE, J.P., F.I.HSG. (*Chairman*)

MR. W. R. ALLERTON

*MR. G. EVANS

MRS. B. F. GIBBS

THE REV. ST. JOHN B. GROSER, M.C.

MR. G. S. McINTIRE, C.B.E., M.A., LL.B.

MR. K. MARR-JOHNSON, F.R.I.C.S.

MISS D. E. MISKIN, B.A., F.S.H.M.

*MISS F. E. PECK, M.B.E.

THE VISCOUNTESS PORTAL, M.B.E.

MR. A. R. STAMP

Assessor: MISS G. M. AVES, O.B.E.

Joint Secretaries: MISS M. EMPSON

MR. J. C. H. HOLDEN

* Co-opted members.

The estimated cost of the preparation of this report is £292 7s. 7d. of which £208 0s. 0d., represents the estimated cost of printing and publishing the report.

CONTENTS

	<i>Paragraph</i>	<i>Page</i>
INTRODUCTION		
Terms of Reference	1-2	1
Membership of the Sub-Committee	3	1
Evidence	4	1
THE EXTENT OF THE PROBLEM	5-11	1
THE UNSATISFACTORY TENANT	12-13	3
ARREARS OF RENT	14-21	4
THE CORE OF THE PROBLEM	22-25	5
THE AGENCIES CONCERNED	26	6
The housing authority	27-29	6
The welfare authority	30-34	7
The voluntary organisations	35-38	8
The co-ordination of services	39-46	9
The National Assistance Board	47-50	11
SOME EXAMPLES OF PREVENTIVE ACTION	51-59	12
PROVISION OF SPECIAL ACCOMMODATION	60-72	13
The cost of intermediate accommodation	73-76	17
UNSATISFACTORY APPLICANTS	77-81	18
MAIN CONCLUSIONS	82	19
SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS		20
APPENDIX 1.—List of local authorities and others giving evidence		23
APPENDIX 2.—National Assistance Board letter of 26th July, 1954		25
APPENDIX 3.—Rehabilitation schemes—some actual examples		26
I. Rehabilitation in the Family's Own Home		26
(a) Exeter Council of Social Service		26
(b) Leicester C.B. Home Help Service		27
(c) Liverpool Personal Service Society		27
(d) Northumberland Family Care Committee		29
(e) Reading Family Aid Group		29
II. Other Rehabilitative Schemes		30
(a) Home Advice Groups		30
(b) L.C.C. Special Halfway Houses		30
(c) Recuperative Centres for Mothers		31
(i) Brentwood		31
(ii) Spofforth Hall		31

INTRODUCTION

TERMS OF REFERENCE

1. We were appointed by the Central Housing Advisory Committee in May, 1954, "to review the recommendations made in the Third Report of the Housing Management Sub-Committee with reference to the question of residential qualifications required by certain local authorities; to investigate the practice and experience of local authorities in dealing with unsatisfactory tenants and housing applicants, and with regard to evictions; and to make recommendations".

2. We dealt with the first part of these terms of reference in the Report on "Residential Qualifications" which was published in April, 1955, and this report is devoted to the second part. We have understood these terms of reference to apply only to the eviction of unsatisfactory families, and we therefore make no mention of families evicted through no fault of their own.

MEMBERSHIP OF THE SUB-COMMITTEE

3. It soon became apparent to us that in this second report we should be dealing with matters which involve the welfare services of local authorities as well as their housing activities and would need to add to our existing knowledge of this aspect. We therefore invited Mr. G. Evans, the County Welfare Officer for Cheshire and Miss F. E. Peck, Secretary of the Liverpool Personal Service Society, to join the Sub-Committee as co-opted members. Miss G. M. Aves, Chief Welfare Officer of the Ministry of Health, has attended our meetings as an assessor.

EVIDENCE

4. We invited evidence by questionnaire from 101 local authorities. We also sought the views of the Local Authority Associations and of a number of other interested organisations, from some of whom we also received oral evidence. To all those who supplied information upon which this report is based we express our grateful thanks for the help given in replying to the questionnaire, and for the time devoted to discussing with us some attempts towards a solution. A list of those who gave written and oral evidence will be found in Appendix 1.

THE EXTENT OF THE PROBLEM

5. The statutory obligation laid upon local authorities by Section 85 (2) of the Housing Act, 1936, to give a preference in selecting their tenants to large families and to those who are living in overcrowded or insanitary conditions, has limited their freedom to reject the potentially unsatisfactory tenant. It must be expected, therefore, that local authorities, who now own and manage some 2½ million dwellings, will have among their tenants a considerable number whom they regard as unsatisfactory to some extent. We have not tried to assess the number of such tenants; this would have raised difficult questions as to the standard to be applied in determining unsatisfactoriness.

We did, however, ask those local authorities to whom we addressed a questionnaire how many tenants in a year proved so unsatisfactory that the Council had had to resort to eviction. The replies show that the number of families who were evicted or who left on the service of a notice to quit is very small in comparison with the number of dwellings owned. We have not enough information to reach a reliable estimate of the total number of tenants who leave council houses each year as a result of a notice to quit, but our evidence suggests that the proportion may be about 0·1 per cent. or some 2,500 families out of a total of $2\frac{1}{2}$ million tenancies.

6. Numerically this may not appear a very large figure taken over the country as a whole, but it probably represents to the local authorities a considerable loss in rent and in time spent fruitlessly by housing officials. To each of the families concerned it means the loss of a home. If no more were involved than the loss to the local authorities the cure would not be far to seek. They could avoid letting their houses in the first place to applicants likely to make unsatisfactory tenants, or, if they found themselves the landlords of such families, could evict them at an early stage. That local authorities do not do this except under extreme provocation shows that, as public bodies, they accept responsibility towards even those families who seem least willing to appreciate the houses they occupy and make proper use of them. It indicates, moreover, a recognition of the fact that an eviction may have results which go far beyond relieving the local authority (or one department of the authority) of the liability of an undesirable tenant.

7. What happens to evicted families? Seldom, in present circumstances, can they find another house for themselves. Our evidence shows that a few families are re-housed by the same authority, usually in poorer accommodation than they previously occupied. A small proportion are admitted to temporary accommodation managed by the welfare authorities under Part III of the National Assistance Act, 1948. The rest find their own accommodation, usually, no doubt, in the first place with relatives or friends. Often, however, in these latter cases the parents can find rooms for themselves only and the children may have to be admitted to children's homes. Similarly, much of the Part III accommodation of the welfare authorities is available for mothers and children, or the younger children only, the fathers and the older children being left to make their own arrangements.

8. The usual result, therefore, of an eviction is either that the family have to share accommodation with another family—which is likely to mean that both families are overcrowded—or that the family is broken up, the parents being parted and the children separated from one or other parent. In either case the effect on the family, and particularly on the children, is likely to be serious. Local authorities investigating applications for houses know the effect upon a family of shared accommodation. The arrangements seldom last long, and the family drifts through a series of ever-worsening lodgings until they are again evicted or come once more to the notice of the local authority as the occupants of an unfit house.

9. The result of a family obtaining temporary accommodation from the welfare authority may also be unfortunate. The normal responsibilities of parents for their children are weakened, and where these responsibilities are already taken lightly, the tie of the family may be broken for good. Residence in Part III accommodation may weaken a family's sense of obligation to help themselves and yet, if they find no other accommodation they may eventually be required to leave and the children may be placed in children's homes. Those familiar with the work of children's committees have described to us the

ill effect upon children of removal from their parents, even though the standard of care in children's homes is usually incomparably higher than that provided by the parents.

10. If a family deteriorates to an extent that so endangers the security of family life as to lead eventually to homelessness, the problem presented is one not only in the immediate present but one which, if no solution is found, may repeat itself in the next generation. The unsatisfactory tenants of today may very well produce the unsatisfactory tenants of tomorrow. It is largely because of the effect upon the children of insecurity and homelessness that we have approached the problem of the unsatisfactory tenant primarily from the standpoint of avoiding eviction. Similarly we have considered the problem of the unsatisfactory applicant (who may be one who has already been evicted) with the object of suggesting means by which he might be helped to become acceptable as a tenant.

11. In both cases we have considered first the question as it presents itself to the housing authorities. Welfare authorities,* other statutory bodies and voluntary organisations are very closely concerned, and we refer at some length to the contribution they are making to the solution of the problem, but the first emphasis will be upon what the housing authorities can and should do.

THE UNSATISFACTORY TENANT

12. The first question we put to local authorities concerned the main reasons for regarding tenants as unsatisfactory. The three principal reasons, in the order most frequently given were:

- (i) arrears of rent,
- (ii) neglect of the house or garden, and
- (iii) behaviour causing a nuisance to neighbours.

Rent arrears were given as the first reason by over two-thirds of the authorities who submitted evidence and there were some who regarded this as the only reason which would justify eviction. The third reason covered a variety of behaviour likely to disturb or annoy neighbours, such as lack of control of children, quarrelsomeness, the use of abusive language and noise. Lack of consideration for neighbours causes greater difficulties among tenants living in flats.

13. Our evidence shows that local authorities more often evict a tenant because he owes rent than for any other reason. This appears to be because they fear the effect on other tenants if they see that someone can refuse to pay rent with impunity. The influence of the dirty or noisy tenant can often be mitigated by care in allocating him a house of a type or in a position where he can cause least damage or annoyance to others. It is more difficult to ignore constantly mounting arrears especially as the defaulting tenant often boasts of them. The first line of attack, therefore, on eviction and its resultant evils is an attempt to prevent the accumulation of arrears.

* Throughout the report by "welfare authority" we mean the welfare department of County Councils or County Borough Councils.

ARREARS OF RENT

14. Broadly speaking, tenants owing rent fall into one of three main categories:

- (i) Those whose income is so low that they are genuinely unable to pay their existing rent. This position may arise from a change in capacity to earn, following retirement or ill-health.
- (ii) Tenants whose incomes should be adequate to meet the rent charged but who cannot be induced to pay it with any regularity.
- (iii) Those families who are so incompetent in managing their affairs generally that they are constantly in debt. Often these are people whose income is very irregular.

The problems presented by each of these groups require differing treatment.

15. The difficulties of families whose income is inadequate to enable them to pay the rent of their present house may be met by the housing authority in two ways. First, they may arrange a transfer to a lower-rented house; most authorities appear to make full use of their pool of pre-war houses to effect moves of this kind. Some go further and initiate or encourage exchanges also with the tenants of private landlords, where this will enable one of their tenants to occupy a house at a rent better suited to his means. Secondly, those authorities who operate a differential rent or rent rebate scheme* can adjust the rent charged for a house to the capacity of the tenant to pay, without the difficulties involved in arranging a transfer or exchange and the attendant expense to the tenant. Such authorities should be able almost entirely to avoid arrears of rent due to a continuing lack of means.

16. The second category of tenants owing rent, those with means to pay but who persistently fail to do so, present a much tougher problem. It would not be surprising if local authorities should sometimes feel that they are under no obligation to devote time and patience in an effort to save such people from the results of their own folly. There are, however, measures open to the authority in this type of case which are not always applicable in others.

17. In all cases of arrears the golden rule is to act early, while the debt is still small enough for the tenant to feel that it is within his powers to pay it. Some authorities issue a stock letter to all tenants who owe two weeks' rent or more. We are not convinced that this is the most effective procedure. We think that, if the rent collector can obtain no satisfactory explanation of failure to pay, a senior officer should see the tenant either at the estate office or in the tenant's home. If a letter is sent, it should be an individual one, not a duplicated copy of a standard letter. If these initial moves fail, further action should be taken promptly, and several alternatives are available according to the circumstances of the case.

18. Some authorities issue distress warrants for the recovery of arrears. This has the advantage of being a quick procedure and is almost invariably effective, since the tenant would rather pay than lose his furniture.

19. One or two authorities take steps to recover the arrears by means of a "default summons", under which a court order is obtained for the payment of the arrears as a debt. This procedure has the advantage that the possession of the house is not affected, and the difficulties in regard to the collection

* See "Transfers, Exchanges and Rents". Fourth Report of the Housing Management Sub-Committee. H.M.S.O., 1953, price 1s. 9d. net.

of rent after the service of a notice to quit are avoided. The addition of court costs to the debt to be collected may act as a penalty against the tenant. This procedure has been found very effective in securing the payment of arrears of rent where the authority do not want to press for possession of the dwelling.

20. We think that both these methods might be considered as having advantages in some cases over the application for a suspended order for possession, although there is no doubt that such an order may act as a salutary shock to a tenant who has possibly not believed that the housing authority would go so far.

21. Pressure is sometimes brought to bear on tenants in other ways, for instance, by refusing to sanction an exchange of tenancies, or by holding up work of redecoration until the arrears are paid.

THE CORE OF THE PROBLEM

22. The tenants in our third category—those who show incompetence in managing their own affairs—are the most difficult cases of all. Such families are also frequently unsatisfactory tenants on other grounds. Their houses are often ill-kept and dirty, their gardens uncultivated, their children uncontrolled and troublesome. We have received a number of descriptions of such families from which it appears that in spite of diversity of circumstances certain characteristics recur. Because such families present the most intractable problem, we refer to them at greater length.

23. Irregularity of income, which is the most frequent excuse for failure to pay rent, may arise from genuine ill-health on the wage-earner's part, but is more frequently due to an inability or unwillingness to stay long in any one job. In some cases the tenant is self-employed in some such business as rag and bone collecting; in others, spells of employment are interrupted by periods in prison. Sometimes the tenant is a woman separated from her husband, by whom a maintenance allowance is only irregularly paid. Most of these families do not look beyond the problems of the moment or envisage the future result of their present behaviour. They usually owe money to a number of people as well as to the landlord, and they often leave the rent in order to pay a debt they regard as more pressing. These debts are frequently due to their inability to plan the spending of a very small budget, and they often fritter away what income they have. Matters are frequently made worse by discord between husband and wife, which sometimes results in a refusal to accept family obligations. These families usually have more children than the average, but our evidence suggests that these children, though often badly looked-after, are seldom deliberately neglected and that the normal bonds of affection exist between them and their parents.

24. It is, in fact, the existence of the children which has generally secured for the family a council house in the first place, and it is for their sake that local authorities are so often prepared to put up with such families. *We believe that the preservation of a family as a unit, which is largely dependent on having a house to live in, is worth very great efforts for the sake of the children.* We have, therefore, examined as fully as possible the steps now being taken by local authorities to this end. We refer below to many of the methods employed and describe some of them in more detail in Appendix 3. We have also considered what further suggestions we could usefully make.

25. It will be noted that whereas housing authorities can normally deal with the first two categories of tenants owing rent—those unable and those unwilling to pay the rent asked—without calling in outside help, they may need the co-operation of other agencies in tackling the problems presented by the third group. We therefore look first at some of the agencies concerned.

THE AGENCIES CONCERNED

26. There are a large number of agencies, both statutory and voluntary, whose help is available to families in various kinds of difficulty. When the difficulty relates to housing, the council tenant or applicant will look first to the housing department of his local authority. Where it is a case of eviction the welfare authority may be involved, and ultimately, if there are children in the family, the children's department. Many families who would fall under the general heading of unsatisfactory tenants are also known to other services, such as those of the health visitors, school welfare officers, probation officers and the National Assistance Board, but the two primarily concerned with the provision of accommodation are the housing and welfare authorities.

THE HOUSING AUTHORITY

27. There are still some authorities who have not appointed a housing manager, but we shall use this term to cover those officials, no matter what their title and other duties, who are in regular contact with council tenants as the representatives of the housing committee. It is the housing manager who, through his assistants or rent collectors, is the first person to be aware that things are going wrong; and it is the housing manager who makes the first effort to set them right.

28. The basis of both diagnosis and treatment must be direct contact with the tenant; as one witness put it to us, "patient, persistent and personal contact" is essential if the problem is to be recognised and its solution attempted. It will be necessary to see the tenant himself, and not only his wife, and this may necessitate evening visits. The process of securing some improvement, whether of rent payments or house-keeping standards, is in most cases a very slow one. At times little more may be achieved than preventing further deterioration, and even this will be done with difficulty. It may not be done at all unless regular and frequent contact with the tenant over a long period can be maintained.

29. Both time and intelligence are needed, and we have been impressed by those who have emphasised in their evidence that not only must the housing authority have staff trained for this difficult work, but the workers engaged upon it must be allowed to devote sufficient time to visiting unsatisfactory tenants, and should not be overloaded by responsibility for too many difficult families. We appreciate the need for careful scrutiny of management costs, and the anxiety of housing authorities not to involve themselves in additional expenditure. But we are convinced that time spent by skilled staff in work which may avoid loss to the council and subsequent heavy cost to the community generally is wholly desirable expenditure. We are not unmindful of the fact that the salary of a qualified worker may be less than the cost of keeping two children in a local authority home for a year. We recommend, therefore:

- (i) that housing authorities should ensure that at least one member of their staff is qualified by training and vocation (and the latter is at

least as important as the former) to tackle the complex problem presented by difficult tenants, and

- (ii) that the work of the housing department be so organised that these officials may employ their skill to the best effect.

THE WELFARE AUTHORITY

30. Under Section 21 (1) (b) of the National Assistance Act, 1948, the welfare authority (i.e. the county council or county borough council) is required to provide "temporary accommodation for persons who are in urgent need thereof, being need arising in circumstances which could not reasonably have been foreseen, or in such other circumstances as the authority may in any particular case determine." (This is often referred to as Part III accommodation.) In spite of the fact that evictions may be regarded as foreseeable events most welfare authorities are prepared to offer temporary accommodation to families who are homeless as a result of eviction.* We do not overlook the fact that some authorities have attempted to mitigate the disadvantages of temporary accommodation, but for the most part this remains institutional. It is usually offered only to mothers and children, sometimes only to the mother and the younger children in a family. The accommodation is furnished, food may be provided and a weekly charge is made. The nature of such accommodation renders it unsuitable for family life, even where the whole family are housed together in it.

31. Welfare authorities are not anxious to see accommodation, intended for temporary use in an emergency, occupied for long periods by families whose real needs can only be met by the provision of a house. This is understandable. They have, therefore, given thought to how families who find difficulty in getting a house because landlords are reluctant to take them may be led to adopt more acceptable standards. They have also considered how such foreseeable emergencies as evictions may be prevented from arising.

32. Some authorities have tried to carry out rehabilitative work in their Part III accommodation, often in conjunction with the voluntary as well as the other statutory services available. This may take various forms: seeking a solution of personal difficulties, arranging the mother's attendance at a recuperative centre, collecting and paying over contributions towards the payment of rent arrears, arranging elementary training in the care of children, cooking and budgeting. We describe in appendix 3 the provision by the London County Council of rehabilitative centres for families evicted as unsatisfactory. In these houses complete families, including the fathers, are given separate accommodation in which they do their own housekeeping and manage their own affairs under the supervision of specially appointed officers.

33. The object of all rehabilitative work is to fit the family to return to normal life in the community. The County Councils' Association point out that such work can only be satisfactorily carried out where the family can be kept together and treated as a single unit. This may sometimes be practicable in temporary accommodation provided by a county borough, but in the case of county councils the available accommodation will often be too far from the husband's work to make it possible to keep the whole family together in it. For this reason, and because county councils have no power to provide permanent housing, the County Councils' Association and

* The division of responsibility for these families between the housing and welfare authorities was discussed in a joint memorandum adopted by the local authority associations on 25th July, 1950.

other witnesses urge that housing authorities should provide special accommodation in which the rehabilitation of these families can be attempted. This is a point of importance which we return to later.

34. In an effort to avoid evictions and the possible need later to take families into temporary accommodation or children into care, some county councils have invited housing authorities to make known at an early stage tenants likely to be evicted. In many cases the county council's officers have succeeded in securing sufficient improvement, either in payment of rent or in household standards, to enable the family to retain their tenancy. These services will be of most value to housing authorities who do not have any officer with the special qualifications required for dealing with the most unsatisfactory tenants. Moreover, even the best qualified housing manager may well find in some specific case that his own efforts are meeting with little success, and be glad to enlist the help of someone able to make a fresh approach to the problem. The mere fact that the welfare authority is brought in may sometimes help a tenant to realise that eviction is more than a remote possibility. This arrangement is regarded as valuable by the County Councils' Association and we believe that many district councils would welcome its introduction in those areas where it does not at present obtain.

THE VOLUNTARY ORGANISATIONS

35. Of the large number of voluntary bodies which supplement the work of the statutory social services we can refer here only to those which are most frequently associated with families who have proved themselves unsatisfactory as tenants. The extent to which the different voluntary services are active varies up and down the country: for instance, the activities of a local council of social service differ from place to place; only a few areas have a Family Service Unit working in them; and in rural districts some voluntary services may not be available simply because of the distances to be covered.

36. The local councils of social service consist of individuals and representatives of voluntary organisations and statutory services concerned with the social welfare of the local community. They not only bring together the representatives of many local services, but they are often able to carry out experimental work of a kind which may be outside the powers of the local authorities. We quote in appendix 3 two excellent examples, one of preventive and the other of rehabilitative work, being carried out at Exeter and Liverpool on the initiative in the first case of the local council of social service and in the second of a family casework agency. Services of this kind, adapted to local circumstance, may supplement in a valuable way the local authority's own work, and we hope that local authorities in other areas will support work of this nature.

37. The work of the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children is well known. The Society's inspectors will be in touch with some, at any rate, of those council tenants who are classed as unsatisfactory, and their work may often help to prevent the conditions which lead to eviction. What may be less well known is the appointment by the Society in the past six years of a number of women visitors. There are now 24 of these working in the main centres. Their work, which we understand has been very successful, is described as giving "close personal attention and practical friendly help on matters ranging from parental discord and difficulties of adolescence, to the more material problems of budgeting, cooking, cleaning and making the best of small resources". Of particular interest is the fact that each visitor has not more than 25 families under her care at any one time, and

that her help may be continued after the visits of the Society's inspectors have ceased.

38. The Family Service Units, established during the last war, are now widely known for their work with families who have shown little response to the normal social services. The success of their work has been such that they have both set a new pattern for other social agencies and often provided the staff to carry out the work. The worker in a Family Service Unit has one invariable characteristic—that of being “concerned with people, not in isolation but as members of the family” and with the problems of the family as a whole. Their work is best described in their own words: “Problem families seldom show much response to mere advice or verbal encouragement. Practical help is therefore given to show them both that we really want to help them and that higher standards are not beyond their reach”. It may be necessary to give this help over a long period, sometimes until the children grow up. The foundation of the work is the personal relationship between the worker and the family, from which may spring a desire on the part of the family “to achieve better things and a growing confidence in their ability to live like other people”. There are at the present time 11 units operating in London and a number of large cities. At the end of June, 1954, these units were actively helping 404 families. Each worker is normally responsible for from 10 to 20 families at a time. New units may be established at the request of local authorities or of voluntary organisations, but expansion is limited by the number of trained workers available to start in a fresh place. Most units get financial support from the local authority in whose area they work in return for the services of their members. Family Service Units have also provided facilities for local authority officials to gain experience with their units, and some local authorities now employ social workers trained by the Family Service Units to carry out work for them on similar lines.

THE CO-ORDINATION OF SERVICES

39. The success of all efforts to help unsatisfactory families will largely depend on close co-operation between the various departments concerned. Without at least the prospect of a house any effort to re-establish a family may well seem meaningless, while rehousing without a prolonged attempt to secure better standards is likely merely to result in a repetition of the previous history of arrears and eviction. Co-ordination is necessary not only to ensure that the family has the benefit of any service which may be of help to them, but also to prevent visiting by too many different officials.

40. Many authorities have already set up committees consisting of representatives of the departments and services chiefly concerned, and others have made use of the co-ordinating committees established as a result of the joint circular issued on 31st July, 1950, by the Home Office, the Ministry of Health, and the Ministry of Education.* This circular dealt with children neglected in their own homes and recommended that regular meetings should be held of representatives of the various statutory and voluntary services, to which cases of neglect might be reported. These committees would then consider “the needs of the family as a whole” and decide “how the local services could best be applied to meet those needs”.

41. Many of the families whose conduct is such as to make an eviction likely will be known to these committees, and a possible eviction is a sufficient threat to the well-being of the children to justify the reporting of unsatisfactory

* Home Office Circular 157/50.
Ministry of Health Circular 78/50.
Ministry of Education Circular 225/50.

tenants to a co-ordinating committee wherever children are involved. We know that many housing officers have found these committees helpful, but we have reason to believe that in some cases housing departments are not represented on the co-ordinating committees and that in others there is lack of active co-operation, or even occasionally an unwillingness on the part of the housing department to consult with the other departments or agencies concerned. We think that this can only result in a failure to use available services or an overlapping of the services concerned, and we therefore recommend that every housing department should be represented on the co-ordinating committee covering their area, though their representative would normally attend only when local cases were being considered.

42. Where no co-ordinating committee has been set up it will be desirable to establish one in some form to which families in need of help can be referred. Such a committee will be most effective if it is fully representative of the voluntary as well as the statutory services. We recommend local authorities to review their present practice, and to satisfy themselves that their housing departments are working as closely as possible with the other social services concerned.

43. We believe that when a family needs help from a number of different services, as will often be the case with the families we have in mind, these should be brought to it through one worker with responsibility for the whole family. The co-ordinating committee should be in a position to decide which service, or even which worker, might most appropriately work with any particular family. It will thus be possible to avoid the obvious disadvantages of a number of workers, each concerned with one aspect only of the problem, descending upon the family—even perhaps on the same day.

44. Much evidence has been presented to us which suggests that some form of "family casework service" is needed if effective help is to be brought to the type of family with whom this report deals. It would not be appropriate to discuss this question in detail here. We believe, however, that there is much substance in the argument that the basis of successful work of this kind is the relationship established between the family and one worker, to whom the family as a whole would look, not for advice and admonition, or even material help, so much as for practical demonstration of how they may gradually overcome their difficulties by their own efforts. This conception owes much to the example set by the Family Service Units, to whose work we have already referred. It implies specialised work of a high standard, and recognises that the number of families for whom a worker can be responsible at any one time will be strictly limited. We have been struck by the number of different authorities and organisations who are now seeking to adapt these principles to their own needs. We think that much can be done along these lines, without the establishment of any new service, by making fuller use of people now working within existing services who have a special aptitude for personal work of this kind. In the course of our enquiry we have met a number of people who, starting from different standpoints, have seen the need for a form of personal service and found ways of providing it. We believe that such people are to be found in local government service, and that local authorities would do well to seek them out among their staffs and see that their particular abilities are put to the best use in a preventive service of this kind.

45. Much the same point has been made by the Ministry of Health in a recent circular,* which deals with the steps to be taken to prevent the break-up of a family and the ensuing ill effects upon the children. Reference

* Ministry of Health Circular 27/54, dated 30th November, 1954.

is made to the need for close liaison between the health visitors and the housing manager and other statutory and voluntary workers. Local health authorities are advised to consider the possible need to employ a trained social caseworker in order that some one worker may have time to devote "to those families where problems are likely to arise or are known to exist". This is one more example of a general appreciation of the need for this type of service.

46. We are also interested to notice the announcement in Parliament* of the Minister of Health that he had decided to set up a working party to examine the proper field of work and the recruitment and training of social workers at all levels in the local authorities' health and welfare services under the National Health Service and National Assistance Acts.

THE NATIONAL ASSISTANCE BOARD

47. Some of the families who are unsatisfactory as tenants because they owe rent receive rent allowances from the National Assistance Board. Some local authorities have expressed to us the view that when a tenant cannot be induced to pay the rent allowance to the local authority the Board should pay it direct to the authority. Our evidence is that in some cases the Board's officers have agreed to do this but that in others they have refused, even when mounting arrears have led to the risk of eviction.

48. We agree with the Board's view that as a general rule those in receipt of rent allowances should be personally responsible for the payment of their rent to the landlord. We are concerned here only with those cases in which the tenant persistently withholds the rent allowance and spends it on other things. In such cases it is to the advantage both of the local authority and of the Board to notify the Board's officers of default at an early stage. When the Board's officers are aware of the situation, they may take steps to deal with it, such as withholding the rent allowance until the tenant can show from his rent book that he has in fact paid the rent. This is sometimes effective but not always practicable or suitable.

49. In April, 1952, after discussions with the local authority associations, the Board agreed that "payment of the rent portion of the assistance direct to the authority will not be excluded if other methods fail and this appears to be the only alternative to eviction proceedings". In spite of this it is clear from our evidence that the practice of the Board's officers varies from area to area, and that some area officers do not pay a rent allowance to a landlord even in cases where the eviction of the family is in question.

50. We are therefore glad to have permission to publish in Appendix 2 a letter from Sir Geoffrey Hutchinson, the Chairman of the National Assistance Board, to one of our members, Mr. A. R. Stamp, in his capacity as the chairman of the London County Council Housing Committee. This letter contains the assurance that where other means have failed to secure the payment of rent the Board can and will pay the rent allowance direct to the landlord. We feel sure that local authorities will welcome this statement, and that it will lead to yet closer co-operation than already exists between the Board's officers and the housing managers of local authorities.

* Written answer. 4th May, 1955.

SOME EXAMPLES OF PREVENTIVE ACTION

51. We think that it would be helpful to housing authorities if we were to refer briefly to some of the action taken by local authorities to improve the standards of tenants and so to prevent eviction. Certain schemes which seem to us of particular value are described at greater length in Appendix 3, which should be read in conjunction with this section of the report.

52. A number of witnesses have pointed out the desirability of placing a family likely to prove unsatisfactory in the most suitable kind of accommodation. A new post-war house may not only be too expensive ; it may suggest a standard of living which the family feel to be, initially at any rate, beyond them. Again, for other reasons, a flat may not be the best accommodation for a large family whose standards of behaviour are likely to annoy their neighbours. In placing a family, the effect on them of their immediate neighbours should not be underestimated. A tolerant and helpful neighbour may prove the most effective influence of all.

53. Much of our evidence records the value for such families of older property, and we believe the use of such property to be a good way of meeting the problem initially. The prospect of a transfer to a better house later may prove a useful incentive to better housekeeping standards.

54. Encouragement may be given in other ways. Some authorities carry out improvements or provide better equipment where a family show signs of making a genuine effort themselves ; others provide materials for redecorating ; others, again, make arrangements for the provision of essential furniture, new or secondhand, which may be bought for a small weekly payment.

55. Billericay Urban District Council* described to us an experiment in dealing with unsatisfactory tenants, which shows what can be done within the housing powers of a local authority. A group of houses was set aside for families regarded as irresponsible and unsatisfactory, and the Council's chief officers drew up proposals for helping these families to improve their standards. These included additional redecorations, the provision of furniture and equipment, and close supervision by the Council's own officers. The help of the County Council's Children's Officer and local health visitor was enlisted, as well as that of the head teachers of the schools attended by the children. The Council report an encouraging response to their efforts.

56. Where the housing authority are a county borough, they have the advantage of close liaison with their own welfare, health and children's departments. Many county boroughs have established committees on which all these departments are represented, as well as other services, such as the probation service, the National Assistance Board and the leading voluntary organisations. The operation of such a committee set up by Portsmouth County Borough was described to us in some detail ; it includes careful selection of one organisation or person to visit any particular family. Bristol County Borough have appointed a committee of chief officers representing the Children's, Education, Health, Housing and Welfare Services Departments. This committee receive "reports upon tenants of council houses who appear to be getting into difficulties", and decide upon the most suitable preventive action. This authority, too, have placed some reconditioned houses at the disposal of the Welfare Services Committee, and some of these are used for housing families whom the Housing Committee have evicted and are reluctant to rehouse until an improvement in living standards can be brought

* Now Basildon U.D.C.

about. Southampton County Borough are using a large house for the accommodation of 10 to 11 unsatisfactory families, who will be under the general supervision of two experienced voluntary workers.

57. Norwich County Borough have had, since 1943, an "Unsatisfactory Households Sub-Committee" and have appointed two home advisers, whose services are available for the help of council tenants. The duties of the home advisers appear to lie between those of a health visitor and a home help, and are mainly directed to giving the mother practical help in such matters as cleaning, cooking, child care and budgeting. A valuable development of the Home Help service of Leicester County Borough for families in need of training of this kind is more fully described in Appendix 3.

58. The co-operation of the housing authority with the appropriate departments of the County Council presents greater difficulties, particularly in the rural areas. Not only are the services provided by different authorities, but the offices from which they operate may be far apart. We therefore welcome all the more warmly the evidence we have received that county councils are increasingly prepared to make available to the district councils the services of officers specially qualified to help with difficult families. Individual instances have been reported to us from a number of counties where the welfare department have intervened in an effort to save a family from eviction. One of our members, himself a chief welfare officer of a county council, was able to show that, of 124 families seriously in arrear with their rent, who were reported to his department by district councils in a period of 14 months, 115 paid up the arrears, 7 left voluntarily, and 2 were evicted; only one family had to be received into temporary accommodation. Eastleigh Borough in their evidence report that the welfare officers of the County Council have co-operated with the rent collector in securing the payment of the rent in difficult cases. Other counties have appointed special workers whose services are available in certain cases to housing authorities. In Herefordshire a welfare officer with experience with both the Salvation Army and the Family Service Units has been appointed to the staff of the Health Department, and district councils may request her services. In Oxfordshire the County Council appointed to the Children's Department a worker with four years' previous experience with the Family Service Units, whose duties are the prevention of neglect and the rehabilitation of families to enable them to look after their children themselves. More recently Surrey County Council have made a similar appointment. In both these cases some of the families concerned will be living in Council houses. In a few areas some health visitors specialise in dealing with difficult families.

59. In Appendix 3 we describe at greater length the work being done in Northumberland and at Reading by a combination of voluntary and statutory bodies in providing a family casework service for the help of families who may be in danger of eviction.

PROVISION OF SPECIAL ACCOMMODATION

60. Most authorities have occasion to consider what is the most suitable accommodation to offer to people who have shown themselves unwilling or unable to take due care of a new house. The question presents itself primarily in connection with unsatisfactory applicants for houses, but may also arise when a local authority have evicted a family, or when the welfare authority seek their help in rehousing families from Part III accommodation. Such families, however neglectful or incompetent, must live somewhere, and if

they cannot find a home for themselves they will look to the housing authority in whose area they find themselves. The housing authority is naturally reluctant to offer them a new council house, the rent of which in any case would often be beyond their means. What is the alternative?

61. A few authorities have considered the possibility of building special houses of tougher construction and without some of the amenities of a normal house. We do not recommend this solution which, though it may appear attractive at first sight, presents a number of difficulties. It is not easy to see how such houses would in practice differ materially from ordinary houses. Wooden skirtings and picture rails could be omitted, some of the kitchen cupboards now usually provided could be left out, but all the essential equipment would still be needed, and some shelves and cupboards would be necessary for families who would have little or no furniture of their own. If the house is to attract subsidy it must conform to the standards recommended in the Housing Manuals, and even so additional ways of reducing the rent to the means of the tenants would probably have to be sought. If a number of such houses were built together on a site apart from other housing, it would have the effect of segregating the tenants, which we hold to be undesirable.

62. The segregation of unsatisfactory tenants by placing them in groups of houses specially set aside for them was condemned in the first report of this sub-committee on "The Management of Municipal Housing Estates"*, and we see no reason to dissent from the views then expressed. Segregation has two main disadvantages. In the first place it is difficult, if not impossible, to prevent a group of houses occupied by tenants of poor standards from getting a bad name, and hence some stigma falls upon those who live in them. To make families feel that they are set apart from the normal community in this way only increases the difficulty of helping them achieve ordinary standards. Secondly, to group such families together is to expose them to a continual demonstration of those habits which it is desired to cure. It is much easier to persist in such habits if supported by the example of others doing the same thing.

63. We are aware of the discomfort and even unhappiness which a bad neighbour can cause and of the need therefore of some degree of isolation for the most difficult families. We believe that this is best achieved by the use of individual houses so situated that the behaviour of the occupants will affect other people as little as possible, and that though two or three such houses might be near each other, a greater number will only hinder the work of rehabilitation.

64. Instead of groups of houses specially built for the purpose, what is needed, in our view, is a pool of houses *intermediate* in standard between new and up-to-date houses and those unfit for habitation. Many authorities no doubt already possess such a pool of houses. Those who do not might well consider the solution offered by acquiring older houses which, with some repair and redecoration, may be made habitable for a further period. Such houses are sometimes bought in preparation for works of improvement not immediately to be carried out; in other cases they may form part of a future clearance area. They may often be bought cheaply, especially if occupied, and the existing tenant offered a better house. They have the advantage that not only can they be let at low rents, but they do not require of the new tenant a standard of living so much in advance of his existing one as to make him despair of attaining it. Moreover, in the poorer districts, where

* H.M.S.O., 1939, price 9d. net.

such houses are likely to be found, a deviation from good standards is less noticeable and so less objectionable. It is thus possible, without grouping too many bad tenants together, to place individual tenants in surroundings in which subsequent efforts at rehabilitation may have the best chance of success.

65. We do not overlook two considerable disadvantages inherent in these houses. First, they are often small, and many of the families to be rehoused will need more than two bedrooms. It may sometimes be possible, by combining two houses into one, to meet this particular difficulty. Secondly, it may well be argued that the more incompetent a family, the more they need the advantages of a house which it is easy to keep clean and in good order; in other words, the lack of light rooms, adequate shelves and cupboards, a hot-water system and a bathroom is an additional handicap to the indifferent housewife. These things are admittedly desirable, and some of them can be provided in houses which are eligible for improvement grants under recent amendments to the Housing Act, 1949. For the rest, we believe that the prospect of the future offer of a more modern house may prove an important incentive to a family to make the best use of something less good in the meantime.

66. Some authorities with relatively large slum clearance problems may retain unfit houses for temporary accommodation under the additional powers given to local authorities in the Housing Repairs and Rents Act, 1954. Some of these retained houses may well present a limited opportunity for providing the kind of intermediate accommodation we have in mind. The attention of housing authorities was drawn to this possibility by the Minister of Housing and Local Government in paragraph 19 of Appendix II of Circular 55/54, issued on the 28th August, 1954. This paragraph is so relevant to our argument that we quote the latter part: "These houses may also serve to form a pool of accommodation available for families who are homeless and for the rehousing of families now occupying temporary accommodation provided under the National Assistance Acts. Where a local authority use patched houses to accommodate families whose standards of home care are low the Minister hopes that they will from the outset ensure that these families are given the advice and guidance of the appropriate officers of their housing, health or welfare departments so that the families will be acceptable to the local authority as tenants of other houses when the time arrives for the demolition of the patched houses. In county districts the county council may be able to help in the work of rehabilitating such families".

67. It has been suggested to us, and we welcome the suggestion, that there are cases in which property owned by some of the older housing associations and trusts might supplement the provision made by local authorities for families needing intermediate accommodation. Some of these trusts have dwellings built some 60 or more years ago, which do not lend themselves to complete modernisation but which can be improved to provide adequate homes under sympathetic supervision for some of these families. These dwellings might be made available to evicted or unsatisfactory families, if the local authority were prepared to take tenants of the housing association in exchange. We feel sure that such an offer would be welcome to housing authorities, and we hope that co-operation of this kind may take place.

68. Some form of intermediate accommodation is of special importance to housing authorities for families whose eviction has become unavoidable. We recognise that a housing authority must occasionally evict a tenant who cannot be induced to comply with the regulations of his tenancy, and we realise that normally this step is taken only as a last resort. We firmly believe, how-

ever, that the authority should not regard an eviction merely as a solution of their difficulties, but as a stage in the treatment of a family. As such, the next stage must be envisaged from the outset, with the ultimate object of re-establishing the family in their own home. Sometimes the authority may do this straight away by the offer of poorer accommodation. In other cases they may withhold this offer until the family have paid the arrears or a substantial part of them. Sometimes it may be held desirable for the family to enter temporary accommodation of the welfare authority, with all that this entails of possible separation of members of the family and conforming to the authority's requirements. Where, after consultation with the welfare authority, this step is taken it should be on the understanding that the period of residence will be limited, and that when some improvement is achieved the housing authority will once more rehouse the family. We believe that on such an understanding the welfare authority for their part will do all that they can to help the family to rehabilitate themselves.

69. We have expressed our belief that unsatisfactory families should normally be accommodated by the housing authority and that where they are admitted to Part III accommodation their stay should be short. We are confirmed in this belief by the memorandum we received from the County Councils' Association, from which we think it would be helpful to quote some passages. "The fact has to be faced that there is likely always to be a small number of families who, for one reason or another, are unable or unwilling to adopt standards of social behaviour which will make them acceptable as tenants of normal housing accommodation provided by local authorities. Experience has shown that much can be done to improve the standards of such families but that such rehabilitative work can best be carried out—indeed, can be carried out satisfactorily only—where the family can be kept together and treated as a single unit. This is generally impracticable in the type of temporary accommodation provided by county councils since, owing to the large 'catchment areas' which have to be covered and for reasons of economy, such accommodation usually has to be provided in fairly large establishments at widely separated points." For these reasons the Association think that "the need for some form of special housing accommodation to which homeless families may go can best be met by housing authorities", and they go on to say that if such accommodation were provided they believe "that most if not all county councils would then be willing—with enhanced chances of success—to bring into operation the rehabilitative services which they are best able to provide either by themselves or in co-operation with the various voluntary organisations who have already done such valuable work in this field".

70. We are convinced that this describes the right division of responsibilities between housing and welfare authorities, and we commend it as the most hopeful basis for constructive action.

71. There are two lesser points in connection with rehousing to which we wish to draw attention. The first of these is the power of housing authorities under Section 8 of the Housing Act, 1949, to sell or supply under a hire purchase agreement furniture to their tenants. We would like to see this valuable service more widely provided. A house must be furnished if it is to be a home, and some of the families whom a local authority are called upon to rehouse have little or no furniture worthy of the name. It is little use having additional bedrooms if there is still only one bed for the whole family, and if better meals are to be provided not only are pans and plates necessary but chairs to sit on while eating. Some furniture may be provided free through the voluntary organisations, but things bought from one's own

resources are usually better appreciated. We therefore think that essential furniture might often be provided by the housing authority and payments adjusted to the tenant's means collected with the rent.

72. The second point is the length of notice given to a family of an offer of a house. The National Council of Social Service suggest that a prospective tenant should be told as long as possible in advance that he is likely to get a house, so that preparation can be made for expenditure on furniture, curtains and so on. Such a period might well offer a useful opportunity for advice and help in connection with the responsibilities of a new tenancy. We therefore think local authorities should give notice as long as possible in advance.

THE COST OF INTERMEDIATE ACCOMMODATION

73. The provision of accommodation for unsatisfactory families, whether this is intermediate housing provided by the housing authorities or Part III accommodation provided by the welfare authorities, will impose some financial burden on the community. The latter will cost much more than the former. No average figure of cost is available for adults in temporary accommodation owing to the variety of accommodation and services provided. But according to an article in "The Medical Officer" the standard charge made by Reading County Borough in 1953 was £4 11s. 6d. per week*. The estimated cost of keeping a child in a local authority children's home is £6 4s. 3d. per week†. If an older house is provided by the housing authority they will incur the expense of buying and reconditioning it, and subsequently of managing it; there is also the risk of loss through arrears of rent. The total cost may be surprisingly small, however, and will, in any case, be much less than what the welfare authority would otherwise have to incur.

74. We have given our reasons for believing that the provision of somewhere for unsatisfactory families to live while the work of rehabilitation is carried out can best be made by the housing authorities. If they do so they will relieve the pressure on the more expensive Part III accommodation and children's homes. The authorities responsible for these may then agree that there is a case for helping the housing authorities not only with the work of rehabilitation but also with the cost of accommodating the unsatisfactory families. In the case of county boroughs, it should be a comparatively simple matter to make arrangements for distributing the burden, financial and otherwise, between the housing and the welfare departments of one authority. Where district councils are concerned the situation is more complicated. But we think that some county councils would regard it as reasonable to make a contribution to expenditure of this kind incurred by a district council. We understand that the Minister of Housing and Local Government is prepared to consider applications by county councils to make payments under Section 126 of the Local Government Act, 1948, as a contribution to the expenses of a district council in providing accommodation for evicted families. We believe that such a contribution would be an encouragement to many of the smaller councils to rehouse such families.

75. Authorities, who in the course of their slum clearance work retain certain houses for temporary use, may receive a contribution from the Exchequer towards the cost of purchase and maintenance under Section 7 of the Housing Repairs and Rents Act, 1954.

* "The Work of a Family Caseworker", by E. Hughes, M.D., D.P.H., D.P.A., Medical Officer of Health, Reading C.B., "The Medical Officer", 12th November, 1954, page 252.

† Revised Estimates for 1954-55. Children in the care of Local Authorities in England and Wales, November 1954. Cmd. 9488. H.M.S.O., price 4d. net.

76. Throughout our inquiry we have considered the problems arising from the housing of unsatisfactory families primarily on humanitarian grounds. We believe that it is desirable to maintain these families as responsible units within the normal life of the community, and our recommendations have been made to that end. But we also believe that they will save money. There is not only the immediate economy in costly residential services. More intangible long-term gains are likely to result from the re-establishment of a family as a responsible unit, particularly in the health, mental as well as physical, of the children. We feel that this financial saving to the community should not be overlooked when local authorities come to consider how much they should spend in the provision of houses for unsatisfactory families and salaries of social workers who will undertake their rehabilitation.

UNSATISFACTORY APPLICANTS

77. So far, we have been considering those tenants who are so unsatisfactory as to require special efforts on the part of the housing authority if they are not ultimately to be evicted. We have considered too the rehousing of tenants who have had to be evicted. It remains for us to deal with unsatisfactory applicants, that is, those whose standards are such that a housing authority would be reluctant to accept them as tenants.

78. Many of our previous recommendations apply here too. The unsatisfactory applicant will need rehousing, and much help may have to be given by housing managers and other workers, both before and after rehousing, to enable these families to attain even a moderate standard in the care of a house. The general practice of housing authorities appears to follow these lines. A visit is normally paid to every applicant for a house, which makes it possible to assess the standard of housekeeping and the applicant's ability to pay rent. It is usual to make it a condition of an offer of a house that any existing rent arrears shall be cleared. If the rooms occupied are ill-kept and dirty the applicant is required to show a definite improvement in their condition before he is considered for a tenancy. If this improvement is forthcoming the applicant is likely to be offered one of the Council's older houses or some form of intermediate accommodation. It will often be necessary to wait until a suitable vacancy occurs, or until the right type of accommodation can be made available by transferring another tenant, and during this interval regular visits may be made by the housing manager or the sanitary inspector.

79. There will be cases where, in spite of the incentive offered by the prospect of better accommodation, little improvement is apparent, and occasionally a family may show no real desire for better housing. In such cases the help of the Family Service Units may be sought, or that of the special officers employed on preventive work by health, welfare and children's departments in some areas. Special services of the kind described in Appendix 3 are equally available to families not yet in council houses, and we think that housing managers should ensure that their help is enlisted on behalf of housing applicants, whenever it is needed, either directly or through the local co-ordination committee.

80. Some families, whether they are already applicants for council houses or not, may be evicted by their landlords because of unsatisfactory behaviour. It is as desirable to avoid an eviction in this case as it is in the case of a council tenant, but the private landlord may feel less obligation than a local authority to help a tenant to improve his standards. We hope, however, that many landlords will have the interest even of difficult tenants sufficiently at

heart to co-operate with the local authorities and voluntary organisations in action which might lead to improvement. We think that in cases where these services are being extended to tenants of private landlords the authorities concerned should get in touch with the landlord to ensure that action for eviction is delayed until efforts to help the family have proved unsuccessful. Families evicted by private landlords may be expected to apply for a council house if they have not previously done so, but some may in the meantime be admitted to temporary accommodation by the welfare authority. Here their future should be a matter for consultation between the welfare and the housing authority, and we hope that the process of rehabilitation and ultimate rehousing which we have already described will be set on foot.

81. There is one special group of families to whom we wish to draw attention. These are the families which consist of unsupported mothers with children; the mothers may be widowed, divorced, separated from their husbands or deserted by them, or they may be unmarried. Whatever their situation, these women generally have very great difficulty in finding homes for themselves and their children. Yet it would appear at least as desirable that children deprived of a father should be given the advantage of a home background as children with both parents. We have examined the extent of this problem so far as it is represented by such families in Part III accommodation, and find that during the first four months of 1954 there were in England 401 unsupported mothers in temporary accommodation with a total of 1,094 children among them, and that 912 of these children were either with their mothers (768) or in the care of the children's departments (144). Not all these mothers would be competent to set up and manage a home, and in some cases it might not be right to encourage it. As the County Councils' Association point out, however, these women "are frequently devoted mothers from whom it would be most undesirable to separate their children", and yet if no individual homes can be found for them, there is a grave risk that this will happen. Of the 401 mothers in Part III accommodation early in 1954 only 116 had their names on a local authority waiting list for a house, and this may be partly due to a belief that they stood little chance of success. We should like to support the suggestion of the County Councils' Association that in the interests of the children housing authorities should, in appropriate cases, offer such families some of their lower rented houses.

MAIN CONCLUSIONS

82. Before summarising in detail the conclusions and recommendations reached in this report we set out more briefly the main lines along which we believe that a solution should be attempted of some of the difficulties arising out of the housing of unsatisfactory families.

- (a) The aim of the housing authority should be to enable every family who cannot provide accommodation for themselves to live together as a unit, in conditions in which a decent standard of family life can be achieved.
- (b) Those families whose standards make them unacceptable to other landlords must be regarded as the responsibility of the community, and, so far as their housing is concerned, of the housing authority. For this purpose housing authorities will need some houses of a standard intermediate between new houses and the poorest dwellings.
- (c) In helping families of this kind the mere provision of a house is usually not enough. Many of them may need skilled and persistent help for a considerable time if they are to make the best use of

the accommodation provided, and if standards are to be maintained at a level high enough to avoid eviction in the future. In the case of council tenants the first help will come from the housing manager but this may need to be supplemented by other statutory and voluntary services.

- (d) To prevent the break up of families through eviction and to lead to their re-establishment in the community if evicted, services of a rehabilitative nature are required. These are available from various sources but can most effectively be employed only in the surroundings of an individual home. Thus successful action presupposes collaboration between the housing authority and those responsible for the provision of other services.
- (e) Experience in many different fields of social work appears to show that there are some families who may need the help of one worker able to devote considerable time to giving practical guidance and help with the problems of the family as a whole.

SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. We estimate that some 2,500 tenants leave council dwellings each year as a result of a notice to quit. This means to the authority a loss in rent and officials' efforts and to the families loss of a home (paragraphs 5 and 6).

2. An eviction may lead to the break-up of the family by the admission of the children to a children's home or the mother and children to temporary accommodation under the welfare authority (paragraphs 7 to 9).

3. The effect of this upon the children makes it important to consider means of avoiding eviction (paragraphs 10 and 11).

4. Tenants are more often evicted for arrears of rent than for any other reason (paragraphs 12 and 13).

5. Those unable to pay the rent asked may be helped by transfer to a cheaper house or through the operation of a differential rent scheme (paragraphs 14 and 15).

6. Where tenants can pay the rent but will not do so it is essential to act early before arrears accumulate. The issue of a distress warrant or a default summons might be considered if initial moves fail (paragraphs 16 to 20).

7. Tenants who in addition to owing rent are unsatisfactory in other ways present the most difficult problem, but for the sake of the children a great effort should be made to preserve the family as a unit. In this the housing authority may need the help of other agencies (paragraphs 22 to 25).

8. Patient, persistent and personal contact with the tenant is essential if the problem is to be recognised and its solution attempted. We recommend housing authorities to employ staff qualified by training and vocation to help unsatisfactory tenants, and to ensure that the work is so organised that they have time to use their skill to the best effect (paragraphs 27 to 29).

9. The temporary accommodation provided by the welfare authorities is not suitable for family occupation except briefly in an emergency. Some welfare authorities have, therefore, tried to improve the standards of some families so that they may be more acceptable as tenants, or to avoid eviction (paragraphs 30 to 34).

10. The local councils of social service and other voluntary organisations are available in most places to supplement the work of the statutory bodies, and their help should be sought and encouraged (paragraphs 35 to 37).

11. The Family Service Units are providing a valuable service with specially difficult families and have also provided training facilities for local authority officials (paragraph 38).

12. Full co-operation between the various departments and services concerned is essential, and housing authorities are recommended to ensure representation on the co-ordinating committee for their area dealing with children neglected in their own homes (paragraphs 39 to 41).

13. If no co-ordinating committee exists, one should be set up. We recommend local authorities to make sure that their housing departments are working as closely as possible with the other social services concerned (paragraph 42).

14. The difficulties of some families are most successfully dealt with by one social worker, who may already be employed in some department of the local authority (paragraphs 43 to 45).

15. Some unsatisfactory families receive a rent allowance from the National Assistance Board but do not pay it to the housing authority. We welcome the statement by the Chairman of the Board that if the local authority cannot secure the payment of rent this may be made direct by the Board (paragraphs 47 to 50).

16. A housing authority may help to secure improved standards by placing tenants carefully, by the use of older accommodation and by the provision of furniture, as well as through liaison with the local welfare, health and children's departments of the county borough council or county council (paragraphs 51 to 55).

17. County boroughs are able to develop services in which their housing, welfare, health and children's services all play a part (paragraphs 56 and 57).

18. Some county councils have made the services of specially qualified officers available to the district councils in an effort to save families from eviction (paragraphs 58 and 59).

19. The building of houses below the normal standard for unsatisfactory families is not recommended (paragraph 61).

20. Unsatisfactory tenants should not be segregated in groups, but placed in individual houses so situated that their behaviour will affect other people as little as possible (paragraphs 62 and 63).

21. We recommend the acquisition of older houses to be used as intermediate accommodation (paragraphs 64 and 65).

22. Some authorities with relatively large slum clearance problems may be able to use houses retained for temporary accommodation under the Housing Repairs and Rents Act, 1954 (paragraph 66).

23. Co-operation with housing associations and trusts might result in older dwellings being made available for unsatisfactory families through exchanges (paragraph 67).

24. Eviction should be regarded as a stage in the treatment of a family; and where a local authority are obliged to evict a family they should do so with a view to rehousing them ultimately (paragraph 68).

25. The County Councils' Association have expressed the view that where the district councils provide intermediate accommodation for unsatisfactory tenants the county council would provide rehabilitative services. We recommend this division of responsibility as the most hopeful basis for constructive action (paragraphs 69 and 70).

26. The powers of local authorities to sell furniture to their tenants or supply it under hire purchase agreement should be more widely used (paragraph 71).

27. Local authorities should give a prospective tenant as long notice as possible of the allocation of a house (paragraph 72).

28. The cost of providing housing accommodation is much less than the expense incurred in keeping families in Part III accommodation or children in a children's home. County Councils have powers to contribute towards the expenses incurred by district councils in providing intermediate accommodation for unsatisfactory families (paragraphs 73 and 74).

29. Quite apart from humanitarian considerations, we believe that our recommendations for keeping the family together as a unit will result in financial savings to the community, both immediate and long-term (paragraph 76).

30. Unsatisfactory applicants may need the help of special services in improving their standards. It should be a part of the housing manager's job to see that the help of the appropriate service is enlisted (paragraphs 77 to 79).

31. We hope that private landlords will co-operate with the statutory and voluntary services in action to improve the standards of unsatisfactory tenants and will at least delay eviction until efforts at improvement have proved unsuccessful (paragraph 80).

32. The housing needs of homeless families consisting of mothers and children only should be considered by local authorities, with a view to the offer of low rented accommodation (paragraph 81).

* * *

We have once more been fortunate in having Miss M. Empson and Mr. J. C. H. Holden as joint Secretaries to the Sub-Committee; their careful collection and summarising of the considerable and varied volume of evidence has been of the greatest possible assistance to us in coming to the conclusions on which our recommendations are based. Their work has been done throughout with understanding of the human problems involved in our enquiry and we again desire to record our appreciation of their services.

(Signed)

P. L. LEIGH-BREESE (*Chairman*).
W. R. ALLERTON.
GEORGE EVANS.
B. F. GIBBS.
ST. JOHN B. GROSER.
G. S. McINTIRE.
K. MARR-JOHNSON.
D. E. MISKIN.
FRANCES E. PECK.
ROSEMARY PORTAL.
A. REGINALD STAMP.

M. EMPSON,
J. C. H. HOLDEN,
Joint Secretaries.

22nd June, 1955.

APPENDIX 1

List of Local Authorities, Organisations and Individuals who have submitted Evidence

LOCAL AUTHORITIES

Herefordshire County Council
*London County Council
Oxfordshire County Council

Surrey County Council
City of London

Metropolitan Borough Councils of:

Battersea
Bermondsey
Bethnal Green
Camberwell
Chelsea
Deptford
Greenwich
Hackney

Hammersmith
Hampstead
*Holborn
Islington
Kensington
Lambeth
Lewisham
Paddington

Poplar
St. Marylebone
Shoreditch
Southwark
Stepney
Stoke Newington
Wandsworth
Westminster

County Borough Councils of:

Barnsley
Birmingham
Blackpool
Brighton
Bristol
Cardiff
Coventry
Darlington
Exeter
Gloucester

Huddersfield
Kingston upon Hull
Leeds
*Leicester
Lincoln
Liverpool
Merthyr Tydfil
Newport
Northampton

Norwich
Nottingham
Oldham
Salford
Southampton
South Shields
Stockport
Stoke-on-Trent
Worcester

Borough Councils of:

Andover
Bangor
Bridgwater
Colchester
Eastleigh
Heston and Isleworth

King's Lynn
Newark-on-Trent
Slough
Southall
Stockton-on-Tees

Tamworth
Taunton
Walthamstow
Widnes
Willesden

Urban District Councils of:

Beaconsfield
Billericay (now Basildon)
Cannock
Castleford
Chislehurst and Sidcup

Esher
Felling
Malvern
Ormskirk

St. Austell
Spalding
Trowbridge
Utttoxeter

Rural District Councils of:

Chesterfield
Congleton
Dorking and Horley
Downham
Guildford

Market Bosworth
Penybont
Rotherham
Sedgefield

West Lancashire
Wrexham
Wycombe
Yeovil

* The Sub-Committee received oral evidence from those marked thus.

ORGANISATIONS AND INDIVIDUALS

Association of Children's Officers
Association of Directors of Welfare Services
Association of Municipal Corporations
Church Army Housing Limited
County Councils Association
*Exeter Council of Social Service
*Family Service Units
Councillor A. R. Flint
Mr. L. L. Gosney
Dr. Greenwood Wilson
Home Office, Children's Department
Housing Centre Trust
Institute of Housing
Mr. S. Kermode
London Council of Social Service
Metropolitan Association of Chief Housing Officers and Architects
National Council of Social Service
National Federation of Housing Societies
National Housing and Town Planning Council
National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children
*Northumberland Family Care Committee
*Reading Family Aid Group
Rural District Councils Association
Sanitary Inspectors' Association
Society of Housing Managers
Surrey and Sussex Housing Officers' Association
*Miss B. H. F. Townsend
Mr. W. A. West

* The Sub-Committee received oral evidence from those marked thus.

APPENDIX 2

Letter referred to in paragraph 50 of the Report

NATIONAL ASSISTANCE BOARD,

30, Old Burlington Street,
W.1.

26th July, 1954.

Dear Mr. Stamp,

Thank you for your letter of the 23rd July about the payment of rent by families in receipt of national assistance.

The Board certainly have no wish to pay rent allowances to families who apply the allowances to other purposes. On the other hand our power to pay any part of an assistance grant to a third party is limited to cases where this would be in the interests of the applicant and it is for this reason that we can only pay rents direct to landlords, even Local Authority landlords, where the payment of rent cannot be secured by any other means and the tenant may be in danger of eviction.

Where our local officers become aware that a family is defaulting in its payments of rent the course we often adopt is to withhold the rent element until the applicant returns to the office with the rent book to show that the rent has been paid. The rent allowance is then given. This arrangement does have the advantage that it does not entirely remove from the applicant the responsibility for paying his rent. But where exceptionally this and any other means have failed to secure the payment of rent we can and do pay direct to the landlord.

In one or two of the cases where this difficulty has arisen which have been brought to my notice recently it has turned out that our local officers were not aware that the rent was in fact being left unpaid. It is, I think, usually known by the Collector when a family is in receipt of national assistance and in cases where the rent is left unpaid it would facilitate matters if the Council's Estate Manager would communicate, before the arrears become too formidable, with our local officers who will then take the steps which I have outlined above in order to secure prompt payment.

Yours sincerely,

GEOFFREY HUTCHINSON.

A. REGINALD STAMP, Esq.,

The County Hall, S.E.1.

APPENDIX 3

This appendix sets out examples of various schemes for helping tenants to improve their standards. The first group covers schemes where this help is given in the family's own home ; the second where it is provided elsewhere.

I. REHABILITATION IN THE FAMILY'S OWN HOME

(a) *The Exeter Council of Social Service : Family Counselling Service*

This service was undertaken at the request of the Child Care Committee of the Exeter City Council (which meets under the Chairmanship of the Medical Officer of Health) who were concerned about the possible eviction of families with children. We quote from an account of the work of the Family Counselling Service submitted to us :

"The Council of Social Service agreed that this counselling service should have an important claim on the time of its Secretary, who has undertaken personal supervision of the work and the main burden of interviewing the mother and father concerned. It was frequently found that the mother had little idea of making a household budget and often had little co-operation from the father. The results of the patient effort which this work has entailed have been very rewarding. Care is taken to secure the fullest possible co-operation of both parents and their goodwill is invariably secured if the initial approaches are sympathetically and skilfully conducted. Frequently the most urgent problem is to help the parents to plan their expenditure so that debts can be discharged and the rent arrears cleared. Sometimes it is necessary to get the father to take greater direct responsibility and not leave the burden entirely to his wife ; for example, by paying the rent himself. In this way a number of families have been helped to clear their debts, with marked results in the happiness of the family as a whole and the welfare of the children.

"Sometimes the enquiries reveal more deep seated domestic troubles which require still more skilled and perhaps prolonged assistance. In the initial stages of this work grants were made to enable a few families to clear their debts ; this did not produce the improvement hoped for and now full responsibility for discharging the debt is left to the parents, with the Council of Social Service guiding and supporting them through their difficulties. If at a later stage it appears wise, grants may be made towards the cost of additional furniture and bedding.

"The personal services include advice in running the home, in cooking and cleaning. In order to encourage this re-awakened interest further the help of some of the mothers has been secured in cooking for an Old People's Club sponsored by the Council of Social Service. In this way they are provided with an opportunity to take part in a social enterprise outside the home and to learn about new methods and recipes which may be of some benefit to their own families.

"A substantial proportion of the families referred to the Council have now cleared their debts and a few have started a bank account on their own. On the other hand, there are a few families which so far have not responded. . . .

"A notable feature of the work in Exeter is the close co-operation of the Housing Committee, which refers at an early stage to the Child Care Committee and refrains from evicting tenants until there has been a proper opportunity for the services of the Council of Social Service to be employed."

Of 50 families dealt with by the Family Counselling Service in the past three years 46 were Council tenants. The Exeter City Council make a financial contribution to the Citizens' Advice Bureau, of whose work this service forms part.

(b) *Leicester County Borough—Home Help Service*

The Leicester Home Help Service employs 250 home helps, of whom 30 form a specially selected group who work with "problem families". These home helps are selected by the Home Help Organiser for their character and experience in running a home of their own, and for their aptitude in dealing with people. They are usually married women with grown up or growing families. They take a fortnight's preliminary course, provided by the Education Department, which covers cooking, washing, hygiene, home nursing and budgeting, and subsequently they work for three months under the supervision of an experienced home help. Their employment is full time, and the rate of pay is £5 16s. 11d. for a 44 hour week. The special home helps attend a weekly conference with the Home Help Organiser, at which problems connected with the families are discussed.

The need for a special service was revealed some six years ago when requests from doctors and health visitors for help during maternity and sickness brought to the notice of the Home Help Service the needs of a number of problem families. Requests for the service of the special home helps are now received also from the Municipal Housing Department and other organisations. The families pay according to their means, the maximum rate being 3s. 6d. an hour, while families in receipt of national assistance pay nothing. Work with a problem family usually starts with a month of intensive help which is reduced as conditions improve. Even after withdrawal of services the home help may keep in touch with the family through frequent visits.

Assistance going much beyond the usual home help services is given to those families by the Organiser of the service and her staff. It includes budgeting, encouragement in paying rent (in some cases the home help takes the rent herself to the Housing Department) and help in finding employment. The Organiser is responsible for liaison with voluntary and official bodies and for contact with employers and prospective employers.

The service receives the usual grant from the Ministry of Health.

(c) *Rehabilitation Scheme for Homeless Families by Liverpool Personal Service Society, Liverpool Improved Houses Limited, and Family Service Unit*

Five years ago the Liverpool Personal Service Society was asked by the Medical Officer of Health for Liverpool to provide case work services for the homeless families in Part III accommodation. This experience showed the need for a rehabilitation scheme which included the whole family. The Liverpool Personal Service Society, therefore, invited the Liverpool Improved Houses Limited and the Family Service Unit to discuss a scheme. The present scheme is based on the experience obtained with special reference to the following points:—

- (i) It is of vital importance that the father should be included in any rehabilitation scheme.
- (ii) The family should be accommodated in reasonable conditions if any training is to be effective. Rehousing in a new Corporation house

with a much higher rent, with every modern convenience and on a new estate is just as unreasonable for a family in need of rehabilitation as overcrowded slum conditions.

- (iii) Most of the facilities for rehabilitation and training are available within the community if they are co-ordinated and planned to fit the individual needs of the family concerned.
- (iv) Careful selection of families for rehabilitation and training is needed so that the limited time and money available is not wasted on parents who are too dull or mentally backward to profit by it and need help indefinitely.

The Joint Committee have bought three houses and are acquiring three more. These are scattered for anonymity but within easy distance of the various social workers concerned and the facilities needed. The houses have been put into good order and reasonable conveniences provided, though they are not as perfect as the new Corporation houses. The tenancies are furnished lettings and basic equipment is provided, e.g. table, chairs, dresser, cupboard, easy chairs, cooker, beds, linoleum, curtains.

Families are put forward by any of the three participating Societies, the Liaison Sub-Committee of the Health Committee which deals with Part III accommodation or the Housing Department. The families are offered the accommodation in order that they may learn to become good tenants, earn a good reference and obtain a clear rent book to enable them to obtain a tenancy in the usual way. The social history of the family is considered and what led up to the present crisis, and the families selected are ones which the Committee think will profit by the training and be able to move on to an ordinary tenancy. The families are free to accept the accommodation offered or not as they choose. When the family is selected a case conference is called of all the social workers in contact with them so that information can be pooled and the number of visitors reduced to a minimum.

Weekly contact with the family is maintained through the rent collector of the Liverpool Improved Houses, who is a trained woman housing manager. The special interest of the health visitor is enlisted and the Liverpool Personal Service Society's qualified family caseworker calls at intervals and advises in any way possible, obtains the co-operation of the husband, advises on budgeting and plans the rest of the training according to the needs of the individual family.

The rent is paid weekly, electricity is paid quarterly and gas by a slot meter, so that the housewife has experience of all methods. Weekly savings for the family's own furniture in a future home are collected by the rent collector, together with small sums for savings for extra expenditure on clothes, shoe repairs, and other necessities.

Families selected are preferably on the housing list of the Corporation, and the City Council have agreed that, subject to consultation with the Housing Committee beforehand, the family is rehoused in the usual way. If the families fail to respond and no improvement is effected, the local authority will treat them as in the same position as any other homeless families. The co-operation of several private owners and Estate Agents enables the acceptance of cases not eligible for rehousing by the local authority if necessary.

The first family, homeless through rent arrears, matrimonial difficulties and bad management, has been rehabilitated and rehoused by the local authority. Contact is being maintained.

(d) The Northumberland Family Care Committee

The Committee consists of representatives of the Northumberland County Council and the Northumberland and Tyneside Council of Social Service. It was formed in 1952 as a result of the anxiety felt by the Northumberland County Council's Children's Committee about the number of children coming into care of the Council. It was realised that separation from their parents was usually bad for the children, and the Children's Committee wished to attempt preventive work aimed at keeping the family together.

The work of the Family Care Committee was originally financed in equal parts by the Northumberland and Tyneside Council of Social Service, the County Council's Children's Committee and the County Council's Health Committee, but the Council of Social Service has now substituted secretarial services for a cash contribution. A trained social worker, with previous experience in the district as a probation officer and children's officer, was appointed, and the County Council paid for her to obtain additional experience with the Family Service Units before she began work. A second worker was subsequently appointed. Each worker undertakes a list of 15 to 20 families at a time.

The families are referred to the Family Care Committee by the co-ordinating committees for neglected children, called throughout the county area by the area medical officers. The Family Care Committee also have an arrangement with the housing authorities that families likely to be evicted should be reported to them, and a large number of the families now being helped are tenants of council houses. The work done may involve almost daily visits to a family initially, and help is given with every kind of family problem, from employment and budgeting to cleaning and redecorating. The Committee believe that in this way they can make a broad approach and tackle the difficulties of the family as a whole, but close contact is maintained with other services and social workers. No rapid improvement in the families is expected, but eviction has been averted in a number of cases.*

(e) Reading Family Aid Group

This Committee was formed in 1952 as a group of voluntary workers under the chairmanship of the then Chairman of the Children's Committee of the Reading County Borough Council. The Medical Officer of Health and the Children's Officer of the County Borough Council are members, and a family caseworker employed in the Health Department of the Council acts as secretary to the Group. The voluntary members include four women with social service training who do most of the family visiting.

The Family Aid Group was formed with the object of preventing the break-up of families and the subsequent separation of the children from their parents. This is done by giving help and encouragement to the families through regular and frequent visiting over a long period. The voluntary caseworkers visit each family under their care one to three times a week, and establish a relationship with them as family counsellors. Much practical help in difficulties of all kinds, including payment of rent where

* Since the above account was given us we have learned that, as the result of a recent circular from the Ministry of Health, the Council have decided that the County Medical Officer should direct this preventive work which may now be carried out under Section 28 of the 1946 Act. A new standing sub-committee of the Health Committee was, therefore, set up on 1st April, 1955, to continue the work pioneered by the Northumberland Family Care Committee, and it is hoped that there will be little change in the composition of the sub-committee and that the social workers will continue on the Council's staff from that date. The Council have agreed that the sub-committee continue to accept voluntary contributions.

necessary to keep the family together, is given. The Group, whose finances are all derived from voluntary sources, has a loan fund from which families can borrow to enable them to buy furniture, decorating materials and other necessities ; but the aim is to make the families ultimately self-supporting.

At the beginning of 1955 the Group was helping 21 families (including 110 children) of whom 18 were council tenants. The Group regards the rehabilitative process as a very slow one ; it claims no complete successes as yet, but feels it has already proved its value, in that it has prevented the break-up of these families and the resultant loss to the community if the children came into care.

II. OTHER REHABILITATIVE SCHEMES

(a) *Home Advice Groups*

The London Council of Social Service and the National Institute of Houseworkers Limited have co-operated in the organisation of a number of experimental Home Advice Groups in the London area, and in a few other places Groups have been formed, usually in conjunction with the local Council of Social Service. The object of the Groups is to enable elementary instruction in household management to be given to those women who most need help in running their own homes. The Groups, which may vary in size from 10 to 25 members, meet once a week under a carefully selected leader, and the subjects dealt with are those on which the members of each Group themselves ask for instruction. The subjects most usually covered are sewing, cooking, child care and first aid, and family budgeting.

Grants towards the cost of running a Group have been made by health, welfare and education committees as well as from voluntary funds.

Further information can be obtained from the London Council of Social Service, 7, Bayley Street, Bedford Square, W.C.1.

(b) *London County Council—Special Halfway Houses*

The Welfare Committee of the London County Council have provided special accommodation for about 18 families in two specially adapted buildings. The accommodation is furnished and consists of separate rooms for each family. The cooking is done in communal kitchens, though each family has its own cooker and sink. The "rents" charged are based on the size of the family, and each tenant has his own slot meter for gas and electricity. Families are encouraged to save for the purchase of furniture when they leave. Families are transferred to these houses from the Council's Part III accommodation and are selected because they appear unlikely to be acceptable for rehousing in the ordinary way. The whole family, including the father, is admitted to this accommodation, and special rehabilitative services are provided. The following is the account of this scheme as given to us by the London County Council:

"The Officers in charge are specially selected for their experience in dealing with difficult families and their sympathetic approach. They see that the children are properly cared for by their mothers, encourage the women to follow an orderly routine in domestic matters and give them advice as to the economical layout of their money, methods of cooking and the maintenance of proper standards in their apartments. Home training is given by the National Institute of Houseworkers, who have held classes once a week in "Home Making" subjects, including dress making and alteration of garments. Health visitors keep an eye on

families and encourage the women to take their children to the clinics. Special attention is given to men who have poor records of employment. They are interviewed by senior officers, who are able to enlist the services of the Employment Exchanges, including Rehabilitation Officers. When they are placed in employment, the Council's officers keep in touch with them, and, as a result of these methods, most of them are now in steady work.

"In the two years following the opening of the units in May, 1953, 17 families so improved that they have been rehoused by the Council and one other family has gone to an ordinary halfway house as being suitable for normal housing accommodation."

(c) *Recuperative Centres for Mothers*

(i) *Brentwood Recuperative Centre, Marple, Cheshire*

This centre is provided by the Community Council of Lancashire as a place of rest and rehabilitation for women worn out by work, poverty, bad housing, domestic difficulties and the bearing and care of too many children in too short a time.

At present the house can accommodate 10 mothers and about 28 children, who stay for periods varying from three or four weeks to three months or longer in special cases. The Centre regards it as desirable that all children up to the seventh birthday should accompany the mother, other arrangements being made for those over seven. Unaccompanied mothers and unaccompanied children are not accepted.

A grant of £30,000 has been made by the Carnegie United Kingdom Trust towards an improvement and development scheme estimated to cost about £40,000. This will enable a total of 15 mothers and 42 children to be accommodated.

The women, who are recommended for admission by local authorities, voluntary organisations, hospital almoners, etc., are relieved of the care of their children, except for young babies, and of the responsibilities of shopping and cooking. They take their share of ordinary household tasks in the mornings; during the rest of the day, which they can spend as they wish, there are informal opportunities of learning something of cooking, sewing and mending and the care of children.

The Council do not claim anything like complete success with every family, but a substantial measure of success is achieved in some 75 per cent. of the cases.

It is emphasised that a family's stay at Brentwood should not be the only attempt at rehabilitation and that it should normally be related to the case work of the sponsoring bodies. Brentwood seeks to establish direct contact with those responsible for "follow up" work after the family's departure.

The present weekly charges (which are under review) are £5 5s. 0d. for mothers and £2 12s. 6d. for children. These are the responsibility of the sponsoring body, but a contribution may be made by the mother. A sum of £1,000 to £1,500 a year is contributed towards the running costs of the Centre from voluntary sources.

(ii) *Spofforth Hall Recuperative Centre, Harrogate, Yorkshire*

Spofforth Hall was opened by the Elizabeth Fry Memorial Trust in November, 1952, as a recuperative centre for mothers. It was intended to meet two needs: first, to provide recuperation and training for mothers when

circumstances in the home appeared likely to lead to a break-up of the family without such help, and secondly, to provide an alternative to a prison sentence for mothers convicted of child neglect. The Home Office recognises the training provided, and a stay for a minimum period of four months may be made a condition of a probation order.

There is accommodation at the Centre for eight to ten mothers, depending on the number of children which each brings. Mothers are accompanied by all their children under school age; mothers without children are not accepted. The period of stay varies from four weeks to four months, but few mothers come for less than two months. These families usually come through the probation or other statutory services, who pay for their maintenance, but a fund is available for the support of a few cases where the local authority cannot accept financial responsibility. In addition to building up the health of mothers and children, a process of training for the mothers has been devised which covers all the household activities of cleaning, cooking, washing, mending, child care, and budgeting. The local health visitor calls each week, and mothers are helped to make use of the health and other services provided. In the final month of her stay the mother buys her provisions with housekeeping money supplied by the home and cooks food for herself and her family. This work she carries out in conditions and with equipment approximately the same as those she would have in her own home. Visits by the husbands are encouraged and they may stay at the Centre for week-ends.

Much importance is attached to care in selecting mothers likely to profit by a stay at Spofforth Hall, and monthly reports on their progress are made to a Case Committee which includes a psychiatrist, a children's officer, a probation officer, a housing manager and the Warden of the Centre. When the family leaves the Home the sponsoring authority is asked to make a report at the end of six months, and again at the end of a year. The success of the efforts made at the Centre are found to depend to a large extent on the existence of an independent home to which the mother can return, and women are not usually admitted until there is a home in which they can put into practice what has been learned at the Centre. The Home Office also make this a requirement for the payment of maintenance. It was thought when the home was opened that of the families accepted for training, about one-third might be regarded as successes, one-third as only partially successful, and one-third as failures. In practice, the results have been a good deal better, and, so far as is known, every mother who has been to Spofforth Hall is still caring for her own children in her own home and the break-up of the family has been averted.

During 1954, thirty-one mothers with seventy-six children stayed at Spofforth Hall. The fees charged are five guineas a week for each mother with half that sum for each child. Not all authorities are willing to pay these fees, and a great many mothers are supported in part from voluntary contributions. The fees in any event cover only day-to-day maintenance, and costs of replacements and repairs have to be met by the responsible committee.